MARVEL

UNCANNY X-MEN®

GILLEN · LAND · PACHECO

Uncanny X-Men

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UNCANNY X-MEN

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Born with powers and abilities beyond those of normal humans, mutantkind has long been hated and feared by those they sought to protect. Now, from their island nation of Utopia, Cyclops leads the most powerful group of mutants ever assembled to protect what is left of his dwindling species. Hated and feared? When you are as powerful as the Uncanny X-Men, does it matter?

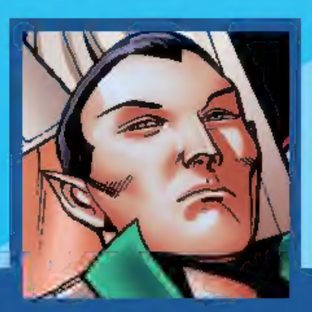
UNCANNY X-MEN

CYCLOPS
eye-blasting leader

EMMA FROST
telepath with diamond form

COLOSSUS
steel-skinned juggernaut

HOPE
power copycat

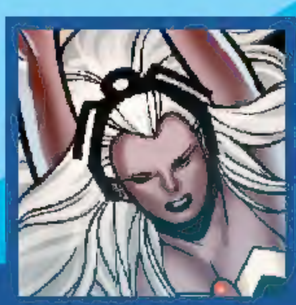


NAMOR
king of Atlantis

MAGNETO
master of magnetism

DANGER
light-shaping AI

MAGIK
magic-using teleporter



STORM
weather witch

PREVIOUSLY

Cyclops has put together the most powerful team of X-Men ever assembled to protect mutantkind. Dubbed the "Extinction Team," their secondary goal is to show the world that they truly are Earth's mightiest heroes. After defeating Mr. Sinister and turning an army of cosmic Celestials away from Earth, Cyclops is confident his new team can handle any threat that comes their way...

"YESTERDAY, THERE WAS A NUCLEAR BLAST IN MONTANA. AN ISOLATED TOWN OF 5,000 CEASED TO BE.*

*ALL OF THIS HAPPENED IN UNCANNY X-FORCE #14 --NE'ER-DO-WELL NICK

"IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD A TEMPORAL ANOMALY MATERIALIZED.

"A SPHERE, TEN MILES IN DIAMETER, ISOLATING THE INTERIOR FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD.

"THE ANOMALY COLLAPSED FIVE HOURS AGO, REVEALING WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN ENTIRELY NEW HABITAT. IT'S BELIEVED THAT FOR THE DAY THAT PASSED OUTSIDE, 130 MILLION *YEARS* PASSED INSIDE.

"BETWEEN THE ISOLATED LOCALE AND (PRESUMED) ACTIONS OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE, THERE HAS BEEN AN ALMOST COMPLETE LACK OF OFFICIAL RESPONSE.

"IT'S BEEN LIMITED TO NEARBY RELATIVES AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT. UNDERSTANDABLY, THEY ENTERED THE HABITAT HOPING TO FIND SURVIVORS.

"HALF AN HOUR AGO, THEIR SIGNALS STOPPED."

XUTOPIA, NEAR SAN FRANCISCO.

HAS THIS PLACE GOT A NAME?

DO YOU KNOW WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

MY SOURCES CALL IT "TABULA RASA." AS IN, A BLANK SLATE.

AND NO, I DON'T.

THE EXTINCTION TEAM.

I'VE BEEN TRACING THREATS TO UTOPIA. THIS TURNED UP. SADLY, IT TURNED UP TOO LATE. I KNOW I COULDN'T HAVE DONE MORE...BUT I FEEL I'VE FAILED THAT TOWN.

I CANNOT MAKE AMENDS. BUT I *CAN* MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T GET WORSE.

THANKS FOR BRINGING THIS TO US, BETSY.

EXTINCTION TEAM: WE INSERT BY TELEPORTATION IN FIVE MINUTES. PREP FOR RESCUE AND QUARANTINE.

BETSY...CAN I HAVE A WORD?

WITH EMMA RECOVERING FROM HER INJURIES, WE'RE DOWN A PSYCHIC.

I CAN SEE YOU'RE EXHAUSTED, BUT IF YOU'RE ABLE...

I'M ABLE. EXHAUSTED BUT ABLE.

I'LL BE ON AS MANY TEAMS AS IT TAKES.

LOGAN MADE IT LOOK SO EASY.

HE ALWAYS DID. BEST HE IS, AND ALL THAT.

DANGER, PUT ME THROUGH TO CAPTAIN AMERICA.

STEVE: ARE YOU AWARE OF THE MONTANA SITUATION?

ONLY JUST. A TOWN DESTROYED AND I FIND OUT **NOW**? IT'S INSANE. THE INFRASTRUCTURAL DAMAGE FROM THE SERPENT WAR IS **STILL** HURTING US.

MY TEAM'S IN TRANSIT TO CONTAIN THE SITUATION. I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW.

I APPRECIATE IT. IF YOU CAN DEAL WITH THAT, I CAN CONCENTRATE ON FINDING WHOEVER'S RESPONSIBLE.

CONVENTIONAL SUPPORT AND SECURITY PERSONNEL WILL BE THERE SOON, BUT IF IT ESCALATES, I'LL HAVE YOUR BACK.

...SCOTT. I KNOW THAT THE PRESS ARE TRYING TO MAKE IT A THING BETWEEN THE AVENGERS AND YOU, BUT I WANTED TO SAY THAT AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, NOTHING HAS CHANGED. YOU'RE FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT.

IF **ALL** PRIVATE CITIZENS WERE AS PUBLICLY MINDED, THE WORLD WOULD BE A BETTER PLACE.

I'M GLAD WE AGREE.

"X-MEN, WE'RE GOING IN. IMPACT IN FIVE, FOUR, THREE, TWO..."

X MONTANA.

ONE. X-MEN, DEPL--

OH, DAMN IT.

"DAMN IT."

TRANSFER FROM NEW YORK TO MONTANA, I SAYS.

NO SUPERBATTLES IN MONTANA, I SAYS.

HAVE A QUIET LIFE, I--

COME THIS WAY AND LIVE.

PSYLOCKE: SCANS?

THEY'RE... CRAZED? CONFUSED. LOST. EVEN PANICKED.

DANGER: GATHER DATA AND SEND IT TO THE LAB. I NEED PRELIMINARIES ASAP.

UPLOADING DATA.

AFFIRMATIVE.

ARE THEY SENTIENT?

NO. PRIMARILY INSTINCTIVE. NO HIGHER-LEVEL INTELLIGENCE.

THANK THE GODDESS.

THEN THIS SLAUGHTER IS MERELY CRUEL RATHER THAN OBSCENE.

THE X-LAB. UTOPIA.

INITIAL THEORY: SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH THEIR NAVIGATION.

INSIDE THE TEMPORAL ANOMALY THE HEAVENS WOULD BE VIRTUALLY STATIONARY. IF THEY NAVIGATED BY THEM...

ENORMOUS FIERY BALL! FLIES ACROSS THE SKY! DRIVING THEM INSANE TO THE POWER OF CRAZY TIME!

STORM--

I UNDERSTAND. HIDE THE SUN.

DOABLE.

"DOABLE"?

I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT SOME FIND ME HAUGHTY. I AM ATTEMPTING TO MITIGATE.

FOES DEFEATED BY THE MERE SHADE? NAMOR SUSPECTS THIS WILL BE AN UNUSUAL JOURNEY.

SHARP. YOU'RE NOT JUST A PRETTY FACE, ARE YOU?

NO. A COMPLETE COMPILATION OF NAMOR'S VIRTUES WOULD BE A FAR LENGTHIER LIST.

WOULD IT INCLUDE "GREAT ABS"?

YES, THEY WOULD BE DOCUMENTED.

HOPE, NAMOR: CAN IT.

DANGER?

DOCTOR NEMESIS REPORTS THAT PRIMARY ANALYSIS SHOWS WIDESPREAD TRACES OF CELESTIAL ENERGIES.

HE IS ALSO SHOUTING AGAIN. WHY IS HE ALWAYS SHOUTING?

THEN IT'S SINISTER *AGAIN*. HALF OF US NEED TO HEAD BACK TO UTOPIA TO RESEARCH THAT. THE REST--

NO, SCOTT.

I CAN SENSE *NOTHING* OF SINISTER HERE.

IF THERE IS A CELESTIAL INVOLVEMENT, IT'S FROM ANOTHER SOURCE. I'M COMPLETELY SURE.

UNDERSTOOD. THEN WE PROCEED TO THE NEXT STEP...

MAGIK: ARE THE CIVILIANS CLEAR?

THEY ARE. AND UNDERSTAND *STAYING* CLEAR IS OF IMPORT, IN A WAY THAT ONLY BEING ATTACKED BY A RAVENOUS SWARM CAN TRULY TEACH.

GOOD. THEN WE'RE GOING IN.

DANGER--I WANT YOU ABOVE TABULA RASA AS A PROXY FOR THE SCIENCE SUPPORT. THIS IS AN ALIEN ENVIRONMENT. I WANT MOMENT-BY-MOMENT CONSULTATION ON ANYTHING WE FIND.

IF I MUST, I WILL BE YOUR LIVING SATELLITE.

AGAIN.

EVERYONE ELSE-- TAKE THE SCANNING EQUIPMENT. FIND PEOPLE. SURVIVE. TEAMS OF TWO. WHO'S WITH WH--

MY SISTER AND I.

...RIGHT.

THE WATERS. THERE IS SENTIENT LIFE. I CAN SENSE IT. I AM THE ONLY SUITABLE EMISSARY.

HEY, I GOT SCUBA. *AND* A HARPOON GUN.

UNLESS SHE OBJECTS, I'D LIKE THE HONOR OF MS. BRADDOCK'S COMPANY.

...NO PROBLEM.

GOOD. KEEP IT TIGHT, X-MEN. I'VE SAID WE'RE GOING TO SAVE THE DAY.

DON'T TURN ME INTO A LIAR.

CONSIDER THIS PLACE, BROTHER: DESTRUCTION AND CREATION, LIFE AND DEATH, ALL TIED TOGETHER.

THEY'RE NOT MERELY OPPOSITES. THEY ARE NOT ALIEN TO ONE ANOTHER.

IT'S ALL PART OF LIFE. WE CANNOT FORGET THAT.

ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER, SNOWFLAKE?

NOT PARTICULARLY. I'M TRYING TO MAKE YOU *FEEL*, PERIOD. EMOTIONS CAN DESTROY US. BUT EMOTIONS ARE WHAT MAKE US-- AND *KEEP* US-- HUMAN.

BEING HUMAN IS NOT A MATTER OF YOUR ORIGINS. IT IS A STATE OF BEING. IT IS A CHOICE. TRUST ME ON THIS.

COME. LET'S MAKE HASTE...

SAVE YOUR EFFORTS. I AM IN CONTROL OF THE JUGGERNAUT.

I AM--

OH MY.

THAT'S...

THAT'S BEAUTIFUL.

THAT IT IS, BROTHER. THAT IT IS.

ELSEWHERE IN TABULA RASA...

THAT NOISE. IT'S SO WONDERFUL. IT'S...

THE CRYSTALS GENERATE THE SOUND. THE SOUND MAKES OTHER CRYSTALS VIBRATE AND...DISINTEGRATE? AND THE PARTICLES... GROW?

SO...MUSIC ACTING LIKE POLLINATION. *MORE* WONDERFUL.

HANK WOULD HAVE LOVED IT HERE.

I SAID, HANK WOULD HAV--

I KNOW. AND I DIDN'T MAKE YOU MY SECOND JUST SO YOU COULD GUILT-TRIP ME.

NO. BUT I LIKE TO THINK OF THAT AS A PERK.

I DON'T *ENJOY* THE SCHISM WITH THE SCHOOL. THEY WERE MY *FRIENDS*. THEY MEANT EVERYTHING TO ME.

BUT IT'S NECESSARY.

I KNOW YOU THINK THAT'S TRUE...

...BUT ONE DAY, GODDESS WILLING, IT WON'T BE.

AND WHEN THAT DAY ARRIVES, I WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU RECOGNIZE IT.

SCOTT!

...SCOTT?

3 MILES AWAY.

SHHUP.

PHUDD

NOTE TO SELF: GET BETSY TO DELETE MY MEMORY OF THE LAST FORTY SECONDS.

KRAK

THE TABULA NASA RIVER.

WITH ALL THESE WEEDS, IT'S LIKE SWIMMING THROUGH A RUG...

HEY! IS THAT IT? THE ECOSYSTEM IS SO DEVELOPED THAT SENTIENT LIFE MUST BE DOWN HERE?

NO. NOTHING LIKE THAT.

THEN HOW CAN YOU TELL THERE'S SOMEONE DOWN HERE?

OH, NAMOR KNOWS THESE THINGS.

THAT SAID, THERE *ARE* TIMES HE WISHES HE WAS A TOUCH LESS INEFFABLE.

TABULA RASA, NORTH BANK.

HMM. CHLOROPHYLL ANALOGUE GATHERING THE EXOTIC PARTS OF THE COSMIC-ENERGY SPECTRUM. VERY INTERESTING.

THOUGH I DARE SAY *YOU* HAVE EQUALLY FASCINATING THINGS TO SHARE...

LEAVE IT, MAGNETO.

THAT'S CERTAINLY POSSIBLE. I COULD LEAVE IT. OR I COULD TELL SCOTT EVERYTHING ABOUT X-FORCE'S CONTINUED EXISTENCE-- AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT.

IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOU.

WARREN HAD... PROBLEMS. HE WAS POSSESSED BY APOCALYPSE. HE DID THIS.

IT WAS A TEST BED FOR THE WHOLE PLANET. HE WANTED TO JUMP-START EVOLUTION.

I COULD HAVE STOPPED HIM. I JUST HAD TO PUT MY BLADE AN INCH TO THE RIGHT. I DIDN'T. I LET HIM LIVE.

AND THEN TABULA RASA HAPPENED.

MY FAULT.

SO...YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD SAVE HIM.

THAT BEGS THE QUESTION: DID YOU?

WE SAVED HIS LIFE. JUST NOT *HIM*.

HE'S A BLANK. THERE'S IRONY FOR YOU.

THIS WHOLE MESS LED TO *TWO* TABULA RASA.

SO...IN EFFECT, YOU SWAPPED 5,000 HUMAN LIVES FOR ONE MUTANT ONE. THAT'S REGRETTABLE.

BUT WHEN THERE'S LESS THAN 200 MUTANTS ON THE PLANET, I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.

YOU MONS--

PLEASE, BETSY. YOU'RE ON A SECRET ASSASSINATION SQUAD. YOU'VE LONG LOST THE RIGHT TO JUDGE ME.

MY LIPS ARE SEALED. AS LONG AS YOU WEREN'T FOOLISH ENOUGH TO LEAVE A SMOKING GUN, YOUR DARK LITTLE SECRET IS PERFECTLY SAFE...

AH.

IT APPEARS THAT YOUR COLLEAGUES LEFT A SOMEWHAT LASTING IMPRESSION.

...THEY THINK *WE'RE* GODS TOO.

ARE YOU SURE?

THEIR LANGUAGE IS ALIEN, BUT I CAN READ ITS EMOTIONAL TONE AND EVEN A LITTLE OF ITS *MEANING.*

THESE PAINTINGS ARE NEW...

LET ME GUESS...

THE SUN RACES ACROSS THE HEAVENS. IT IS THE END OF THE WORLD.

WHEN THE WORLD ENDED, THE NEW GODS CAME. AND THEY FOUGHT.

SO, IF WE GO BACK A LITTLE IN THE TIME-LINE...

THIS WOULD BE AN *OLD* GOD? A GOD WHO LIVED IN THE SKY? AND HE DISAPPEARED WHEN THE SUN STARTED TO RACE ACROSS THE SKY?

IS THAT RIGHT?

I THINK SO. THE FOREVER...NO, MORE LIKE "IMMORTAL." *THE IMMORTAL MAN* LEFT THE HEAVENS.

THEN THE NEW GODS CAME...

IT'S STRANGE. THEIR EMOTIONS ARE VERY POWERFUL; POETIC AND ENCHANTING.

AND THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. ABOUT *"THE SAVAGE."* HMM.

HMM. *"THE IMMORTAL MAN."* I WONDER WHAT INSPIRED IT?

I CAN CHANCE A GUESS. AND ALSO SPECULATE WHAT THE NEXT PANEL IN THEIR LITTLE HISTORY IS GOING TO BE...

"THE IMMORTAL MAN RETURNS."

AND, IF I'M ANY JUDGE OF CHARACTER, "GODS OLD AND NEW WAR."

LAND
+MARTEGANCIA

IT IS AS THE MANY-BATCHERS SAID.

THIS IS A TIME OF TESTING.

THE GOLDEN EGG SPRINTS ABOVE US. THE IMMORTAL MAN LEAVES THE SKIES.

THE GODS WHO CAME IN HIS PLACE ARE FALSE GODS, SENT TO TEMPT US. AND WE PAINTED EFFIGIES...

THESE OTHER NEW GODS ARE FALSE TOO.

ARE YOU READY, BETSY?

YES, I'M READY.

IT WAS ALL A TEST. A TEST WE FAILED.

FOR NOW THE IMMORTAL MAN HAS RETURNED.

WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.

AND WHATEVER SINS MADE HIM LEAVE HAVE ONLY BEEN DARKENED BY OUR IDOLATRY.

WE WILL BEG FORGIVENESS. WE KNEW NOT WHAT WE DID. THE IMMORTAL MAN...

...HE WILL SURELY FORGIVE US.

HE IS A LOVING GO--

HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT US.

IT APPEARS NOT. THOUGH HIS FEELINGS TOWARDS THE NATIVES ARE RATHER PRONOUNCED.

"IT'S AS IF IRON MAN HAD A GRUDGE AGAINST CAVEMEN..."

I WONDER WHAT THEY *DID.*

STOP BEING SO CYNICAL. RIP THAT DAMN SUIT OPEN!

"IF ONLY IT WERE SO EASY. BUT IT'S AS IF HE'S...NOT QUITE *THERE.*

"A DIMENSIONAL TWIST OF SOME KIND. FASCINATING."

STILL--THE "*FASCINATING*" DOESN'T EXTEND TO HIS PROJECTILES.

CYCLOPS! WE HAVE A SITUATION! A MAJOR SITUATION!

THE LOCAL EQUIVALENT OF DOCTOR DOOM HAS TURNED UP. REQUEST ASSISTANCE.

UNDERSTOOD, PSYLOCKE.

STORM TO ALL POINTS. ALL MAKE HASTE TO PSYLOCKE'S POSITION.

BUSY!

BUSY!

IMPERIUS REX!

PRIORITIES ADJUSTED. BREAKING OFF HIGH ALTITUDE SCAN FOR SUMMERS' LIFE-SIGNS.

PSYLOCKE-- ALL AVAILABLE ARE INCOMING. HOLD ON. DON'T WORRY. WE'LL BE THERE SOON.

WAIT-- WHAT? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO CYCLOPS?

CYCLOPS IS GONE. HE DISAPPEARED DOWN SOME KIND OF...TRAP.

OR, AT LEAST, I *HOPE* IT WAS A TRAP...

"...THE ALTERNATIVE DOESN'T BEAR THINKING ABOUT."

IF YOU DON'T FREE US IMMEDIATELY, YOU WILL REGRET IT.

GHH-HH-HH

GIVE IT UP. HE DOESN'T RESPOND TO ANYTHING. HE JUST DOES THAT CREEPY NOISE. BUT...

...YOU'RE CYCLOPS, RIGHT? THE BLASTING GUY. CAN'T YOU...

NO. I CAN'T REACH MY VISOR AND HE'S BOUND MY FINGERS SO I CAN'T ACTIVATE IT WITH MY PALM-BUTTON.

HE HAS NO IDEA HOW LUCKY HE IS.

HGGGHHH.

HOW'S EVERYONE BEARING UP? ANY CASUALTIES? INJURIES?

NO. HE CAPTURED US WITH SOME KIND OF SPORES WHEN WE WERE LOOKING FOR SURVIVORS. SINCE THEN HE'S FED US ALL KIND OF CRAZY STUFF, BUT THE SAVAGE ONLY GETS ANGRY WHEN WE SHUT UP--

AM... SAVAGE?

WHA?
DID HE JUST--
NO GET SUGGESTIVE ACTION?
SAVAGE NO *WANT* YOU SHUT UP. WANT TO LISTEN WORDS.
I AM STARTING TO... UNDERSPEAK? UNDERSTAND?
YOU *UNDERSTAND?*
NOT ALL YET. I UNDERSTANDING GOOD-BETTER.
NOT HARD SPEAK. NOW, SAVAGE QUICK-LEARNER...
LET US MORE TALK.

HE'S IMPROVING...

I PRESUME BY THE FACT HE'S STILL CONSCIOUS MEANS YOU CAN'T MERELY TURN OFF HIS MIND?

NO. HIS THOUGHTS ARE... *GHOSTLY* TOO. AND PRETTY DAMN ALIEN.

POETIC AS WELL...

...IN AN ANGRY KIND OF WAY.

I CAN DEFLECT HIS PROJECTILES, BUT I FEAR EVENTUALLY HE'S GOING TO GET LUCKY. AND WITH NO METAL DEPOSITS AROUND, I FEAR THE MASTER OF MAGNETISM MAY BE OUT OF OPTIONS.

THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO?

I JEST.

I COULD HAVE DRAGGED A SATELLITE FROM ORBIT, A BUICK FROM ACROSS STATE OR EVEN THOSE BLADES OF YOURS, NINJA BETSY.

BUT THIS WAS QUICKEST.

"AT LEAST HE'S TAKING US SERIOUSLY.

"THOUGH NANO-EDGED SHRAPNEL HAS A WAY OF FOCUSING ONE'S ATTENTION."

YES, THAT'S RIGHT, YOU CURIOUS CREATURE.

YOUR--

--MOVE.

TELE--

--PORTER!

DANGER: SITUATION IS CRITICAL.

WHEN CAN WE EXPECT BACKUP?

SHORTLY.

TRAJECTORY PROCESSING.

HOW SHORTLY?

RIGHT NOW.

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE, HUMANS.

ENOUGH.

HE'S GONE TO GROUND. THAT HE UNDERSTANDS FEAR BODES WELL FOR REASONING WITH HIM...

ALL TEAMS. REPORT.

WE THOUGHT SOME CRYSTALS WERE FLOWERS. THEY WERE ACTUALLY A LURE. SOME ANIMALS HAVE TAKEN MAGIK.

THEY'VE TRANQUILLIZED HER AND DRAGGED HER INTO THE CAVE SYSTEM...

UNDERSTOOD, COLOSSUS.

...DO YOU NEED US?

NYET.

NAMOR?

WE'VE DEFEATED THE FORCE, BUT THE PROBLEM REMAINS. IT WILL BE SOLVED.

WE'LL PROVIDE UPDATES AS THE SITUATION DEMANDS.

ER... WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

ASSES KICKED, GO HOME.

THESE "ASSES." THIS FORCE WILL NOT BE THE LAST.

THEY BELIEVE THEY'RE UNDER ATTACK.

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND.

THEY HAVE LIVED IN THESE WATERS FOR ALL TIME. IT'S ALL THEY'VE KNOWN. THEY'VE *EVOLVED* TO LIVE IN THIS RIVER.

BUT FOR THEM, IT WASN'T A RIVER. IT WAS A LAKE.

"THE WATER DIDN'T FLOW AS TIME STOOD STILL. THEIR HOMES AREN'T BUILT TO WITHSTAND A CURRENT.

"THEY THINK THEY'RE BEING ATTACKED, THE WATER'S EITHER BEING PUSHED FROM UPSTREAM OR PULLED FROM DOWNSTREAM.

"THEY WILL LASH OUT AGAIN AND AGAIN...AND NOW THEY PRESUME WE ARE AMONGST THEIR ENEMIES."

YOU REALLY AREN'T JUST A PRETTY FACE.

YOUR INCREDULITY SHOWS YOUR INEXPERIENCE. TO BE KING OF ATLANTIS TAKES MORE THAN PERFECT AESTHETICS.

WE HAVE TO MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND WE ARE FRIENDS, NOT FOES.

DO YOUR AQUATIC POWERS INCLUDE BEING ABLE TO SPEAK TAPEWORM?

NO...

...BUT THERE ARE UNIVERSAL TONGUES IN WHICH NAMOR IS FULLY FLUENT.

THE TWO OTHER GROUPS ARE ENGAGED. THESE PROBLEMS ARE OURS ALONE.

WE MUST DISCERN THE PURPOSE OF THE FIEND AND FIND CYCLOPS. DANGER, I WANT YOU--

NO NEED TO TROUBLE THE METALLIC BIPED.

I HAVE ALL YOUR ANSWERS.

AND APOLOGIZE FOR THE DELAY IN PROVIDING THEM. I BROKE CYCLOPS' FAR-TALKING DEVICE.

HE... SPEAKS ENGLISH?

HE LEARNED IT OFF US.

IN *HOURS?*

FAR-TALKING DEVICE. RADIO? PHONE? HMM.

IT IS A SIMPLE, RELATIVELY LINEAR LANGUAGE. HOW LONG DOES IT NORMALLY TAKE TO LEARN? NOT MORE THAN A WEEK OR SO, SURELY?

A LITTLE LONGER.

REALLY? HOW CHARMING.

HE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE KIDNAPPING. HE GOT ME BY...I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. HE CUT EVERYONE'S BONDS, BUT THEY'RE STAYING IN HIS HOME. HE THINKS IT'S SAFER, AND I TEND TO AGREE.

I APOLOGIZE AND RAISE HANDS TO DISPLAY I MEAN NO ILL AND AM UNARMED.

I HAD TO STUDY YOU. I WAS NOT SURE YOU WERE SENTIENT.

FRANKLY, I AM STILL NOT CONVINCED.

YOU TAKE MORE THAN A WEEK TO LEARN THIS LANGUAGE. THAT DOES NOT STRIKE ME AS PARTICULARLY SENTIENT.

BUT I WOULD NOT...AH, WAIT. YOU HAVE CONTRACTIONS. INTERESTING.

I *WOULDN'T* HURT YOU. GIVEN A CHOICE, I WOULDN'T HURT ANYONE.

IT'S ALL LIFE, AND ALL PRECIOUS.

MY OLD FRIEND ALWAYS FELT DIFFERENTLY. AND I FEAR THE LESSONS OF THE LAST 65 MILLION YEARS WILL HAVE ONLY HARDENED THAT.

...YOU BETTER EXPLAIN.

"OUR PEOPLE CALLED OURSELVES THE APEX. WE WERE--FOR WANT OF A BETTER PHRASE--THE HIGHEST SPECIES IN THIS LITTLE TIME-CAPSIZED ISLAND.

"MY FRIEND AND I WERE OUR FINEST MINDS. WE KNEW THE LONG NIGHT WAS COMING--AND WITH IT, AN ENERGY CRISIS.

"FOR 65 MILLION YEARS THERE WOULD BE NO INPUT OF ENERGY FROM *OUTSIDE* THE SYSTEM. THE SLOW LIGHT OF THE SUN WOULD BE NO MORE.

"OUR OWN... *CELESTIAL* ENGINES WOULD BE INSUFFICIENT TO KEEP US IN THE MANNER THE APEX WAS ACCUSTOMED TO."

"HE FAVORED ESCAPE, CLAIMING HIS SCIENCE COULD PUNCH THROUGH THE BOUNDARY INTO THE WORLD OUTSIDE.

"I ARGUED THAT WE SHOULD ENTER STASIS, USING THE RESIDUAL POWER TO MAINTAIN US UNTIL THE DAWN.

"I WAS REJECTED, FOR UN-APEXIAN DEFEATIST BEHAVIOR. I LEFT AND PREPARED MY OWN STASIS COFFIN, OUT IN THE SECLUDED WILDERNESS.

"HE WAS HUMORED, THOUGH THEY THOUGHT HIM INSANE. HE MADE HIS ATTEMPT...

"...BUT HIS TEMPORAL MANIPULATIONS FALTERED. HE WAS CAUGHT IN THE BOUNDARY, BETWEEN WORLDS.

"HE--I HAVE SINCE UNDERSTOOD--WAS VIEWED AS A CONSTELLATION TO THE PRIMITIVE PEOPLE.

"I EMERGED FROM MY OWN CHAMBER AT DAWN, SOME HUNDRED YEARS AGO TO FIND THE APEX, IN DESPERATION, HAD TURNED TO MY TECHNOLOGY. THEY MADE A PALACE OF SLUMBER.

"MAGNIFICENT. SADLY, UNLIKE MY OWN, THEIRS WAS EXTREMELY OBVIOUS.

"THERE WAS NO POWER IN THE VALLEY...EXCEPT THE PALACE ITSELF. FLORA FED ON THE CELESTIAL ENERGIES.

"FAUNA FED ON *THE APEX.*"

"WHEN THE TIME-BOUNDARY COLLAPSED, MY OLD FRIEND WAS FREED.

"I IMAGINE HE DISCOVERED THE PALACE OF SLUMBER TO FIND THAT TIME HAD PASSED...AND HE WAS TOO LATE.

"TABULA RASA FED ON THE APEX ACROSS THE LONG NIGHT. WE ARE THE REASON THERE IS LIFE HERE AT ALL.

"LIFE, BUT NOT THE APEX. WE TWO ARE THE LAST OF MY PEOPLE."

WHAT WILL HE DO?

→HEH← YOU DON'T KNOW MY OLD FRIEND. HIS INITIAL ANGER SPENT, HE WILL RETURN TO MY PEOPLE'S EMPTY STRONGHOLD. RIGHT NOW, HE WILL BE PLANNING A WAY TO RESTORE MY PEOPLE.

"KNOWING HIM, IT WILL WORK PERFECTLY.

"BUT KNOWING HIM, HE WILL CARE LITTLE FOR THE SIDE-EFFECTS.

"WHATEVER THEY ARE."

LAND

THE PALACE OF SLUMBER, TABULA RASA, MONTANA.

"NOW LOOK, NON-APEX FRIENDS. SEE THAT LIGHT AND SMOKE?"

THAT'S BAD.

THERE'S NO NEED TO PATRONIZE US.

IF IT TAKES NO MORE THAN A FEW HOURS TO LEARN YOUR LANGUAGE, HOW WAS I TO KNOW THAT YOU'D GRASP THE ENORMITY OF THE PERIL?

FORWARDING ALL READINGS TO X-LAB.

THOUGH AS A LAYMECH, I CONFIDENTIALLY PREDICT DOCTOR NEMESIS' ANALYSIS WILL PROMINENTLY FEATURE PHRASES LIKE "ENERGY FLUCTUATIONS" "OFF THE SCALE," ET CETERA, ET CETERA.

ALSO, EXCLAMATION MARKS.

OKAY, STORM. BRIEF ME. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER TWO TEAMS WHEN I WAS AWAY?

MAGIK HAS BEEN TAKEN BY LOCAL PREDATORS. COLOSSUS IS PURSUING INTO THE UNDERWORLD.

NAMOR SAYS HE AND HOPE HAVE "A SITUATION" UNDERWATER.

IT IS PERHAPS FOR THE BEST, NON-APEX FRIENDS. YOU PEOPLE ARE POWERHOUSES. *THAT* IS A GREAT REPOSITORY OF ENERGY.

IT SOUNDS LIKE A RECIPE FOR UNFORTUITOUS EXPLOSIONS.

OKAY, X-MEN. LET'S MOVE.

WHAT *SHOULD* WE CALL YOU?

YOU'D NEED A CHOIR OF YOUR VOICES TO SAY IT EVEN IN ITS CASUAL VARIANT.

LET'S KEEP IT SIMPLE. I'LL BE *"GOOD APEX"* AND MY OLD FRIEND WILL BE *"BAD APEX."*

CAN YOU HANDLE THAT?

...IT MAY BE BEYOND OUR TINY MUTANT BRAINS.

OH, I'M SURE YOU'LL BE FINE. LET'S GET INSIDE AND SEE WHAT MY OLD FRIEND (*"BAD APEX"*) HAS DONE IN HIS TERRIBLE GRIEF...

"OKAY, '*GOOD APEX*'. WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING?"

DEEP INSIDE THE PALACE OF SLUMBER.

TABULA RASA WAS CREATED WITH CELESTIAL ENERGIES. WE GATHERED ALL THE RESIDUES AND STORED THEM HERE. AND NOW IT APPEARS TO BE...I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE.

WHAT *HAS* MY OLD FRIEND DONE? IT WON'T BE A MERE BOMB. HE COULD CREATE NUCLEAR WEAPONRY FROM FRUIT PRESERVES. *HMM.* TRICKY TO TELL FROM HERE...

WE COULD GET CLOSER.

INTERESTING. ARE NON-APEX FRIENDS IMMUNE TO COSMIC RAYS?

NO, WE'RE NOT.

THEN, NO, WE CAN'T.

MY OLD FRIEND... WE NEED TO SPEAK TO HIM. I CAN'T RISK MEDDLING WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT HE'S DOING.

DANGER, GET TOPSIDE. GET SCANS OPERATING. WE NEED TO FIND HIM.

NO NEED. BETTER FOR THE MECHANICAL BIPED TO STAY HERE AND GATHER DATA.

I KNOW WHERE HE WILL BE.

THE MUSEUM OF IDEAL PERFECTIONS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? HE HAS A LAB OR...

HEH. NO. MANY ARGUED MY OLD FRIEND WAS THE APEX'S GREATEST GENIUS.

HIS MIND WOULDN'T BE *CONFINED* TO WHAT YOU CALL SCIENCE.

ART, LITERATURE, POETRY, FORMS OF EXPRESSION IN WHICH YOU HAVE NO PARALLEL.

HE MASTERED THEM *ALL*.

SO...THE GREATEST GENIUS...

IS THAT TO SAY HE'S YOUR BETTER?

I SAID *ARGUABLY*.

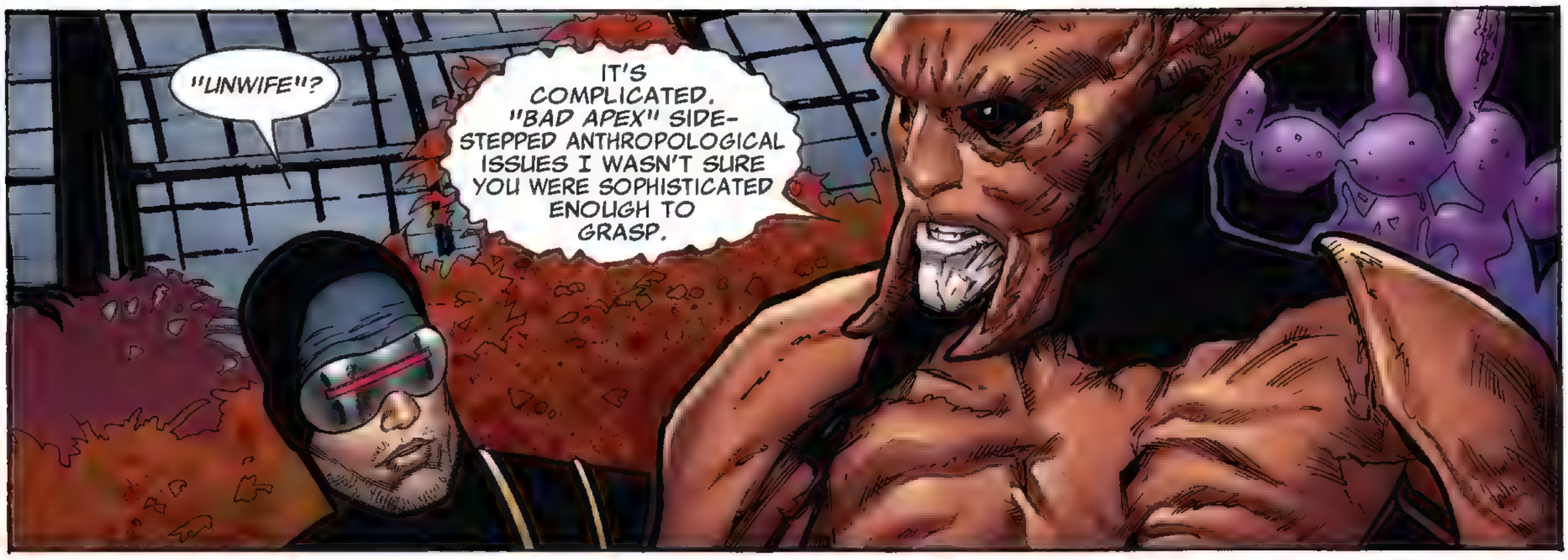
THERE'S SOME WHO'D ARGUE ANYTHING.

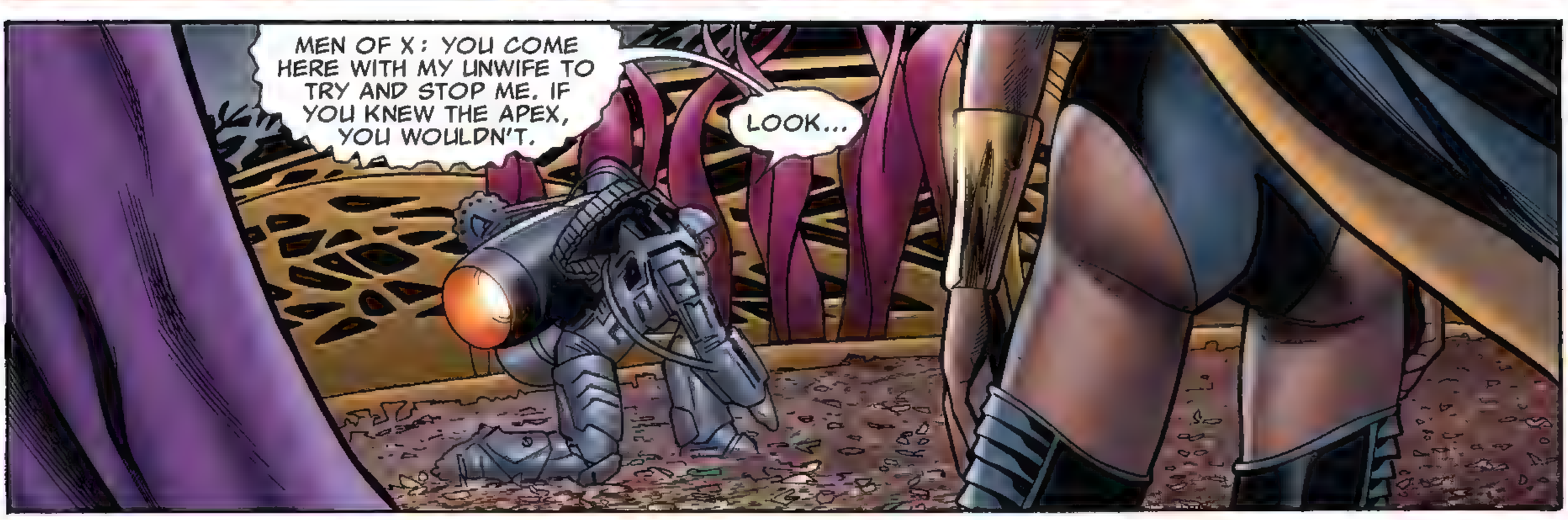
AND MY PEOPLE, WHEN BUILDING THEIR PALACE OF SLUMBER, BROUGHT THEIR GREATEST WORKS HERE TO REST ALONGSIDE THEM.

WHERE WILL WE FIND HIM?

WITH HIS MASTERPIECE.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING YOUR TIME TO EXPLAIN, UNWIFE. YOU WERE ALWAYS SWIFTER TO COLLABORATE.
INTERESTING LANGUAGE. SIMPLE. ROBUST. FLEXIBLE.


"UNWIFE"?
IT'S COMPLICATED. "BAD APEX" SIDE-STEPPED ANTHROPOLOGICAL ISSUES I WASN'T SURE YOU WERE SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO GRASP.


MEN OF X: YOU COME HERE WITH MY UNWIFE TO TRY AND STOP ME. IF YOU KNEW THE APEX, YOU WOULDN'T.
LOOK...

EACH OF THEIR WINGS WAS CRAFTED TO EXPRESS A SINGLE IDEA.

THE GARDEN WAS FILLED WITH A CRAFTED SWARM, A MATRIX OF MEANING, ASSEMBLING AND REASSEMBLING AND EXPLAINING. THIS WAS A *SYMPHONIC* GARDEN.

MY ART, GONE. MY PEOPLE, GONE. WE ARE LEFT WITH THE GHOSTS OF WONDERS.

YOU WALK ON DEAD POETRY.

WE WERE POETRY.

THE MAGGOTS OF THE WILDS TURNED OUR SLEEPING BODIES INTO CARRION.

IT IS NOT *RIGHT*. IT WILL NOT STAND.

IT IS HARD, UNWIFE, BUT TIME *WILL* HEAL. YOU WERE TRAPPED BETWEEN SECONDS. FOR YOU, IT HAS BEEN HOURS SINCE THE APEX LIVED. I HAD *YEARS* TO GRIEVE.

AND YOU CANNOT PUNISH IGNORANT AND UNKNOWING CREATURES. WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE DOING HERE, IT'S GOING TO KILL THEM ALL, ISN'T IT?

I HAVE SEEN WHAT YOUR PEOPLE MADE HERE. IT IS *BEAUTIFUL*.

I CANNOT BELIEVE SUCH A PEOPLE WOULD WANT A SLAUGHTER IN THEIR NAME...

NO NEED TO SPECULATE. WHEN I'VE BROUGHT THEM BACK, I'LL *ASK*. AND IF IT'S A CRIME, I'LL ACCEPT WHATEVER PUNISHMENT THEY WISH.

WHEN THIS PLACE WAS FOUNDED, THE CELESTIAL ENERGIES GREW NEW LIFE. AND WHEN I USE ALL THAT WE STORED, I CAN REBIRTH US FROM OUR KILLERS' CORPSES.

THIS IS SADNESS, UNWIFE, TO SEE YOU FALLEN SO FAR...

BUT NOW I UNDERSTAND YOUR PLANS, I KNOW HOW TO STOP YOU...

AND I, YOU...

THOUGH MY PLAN IS MORE DIRECT.

OH NO YOU DON--

MAYBE GENIUSES IN *YOUR* SPECIES DON'T ADAPT THEIR WEAPONRY WHEN IT'S PROVED TO BE INEFFECTIVE.

BUT *OURS* DO.

YES, YOU'RE TERRIBLY ADVANCED.

WHERE DO YOU STAND ON AMBUSHES?

OR SWORDS?

SKLUNK

THOOM

QUAINT BUT SOMEWHAT OBSOLETE.

YOU'RE AS FOOLISH AS MY UNWIFE.

YOU OPPOSE ME AND YOU RISK DOOM FOR THE HIGHEST THIS LAND HAS EVER OFFERED.

YOU FIGHT AGAINST *CIVILIZATION* IN FAVOR OF *MUD*.

STOP, APEX. THE CELESTIAL ENERGIES WILL KILL YOU.

I KNOW.

I'M *SACRIFICING* MYSELF.

I KNOW YOU HAVE THE WORD, BUT IS "*HEROISM*" A PEJORATIVE IN YOUR SOCIETY?

OH, THEY KNOW HEROISM. BUT POINTLESS SACRIFICE IS *STUPIDITY.*

YOU HAVE A PROTECTIVE SUIT AVAILABLE. USE IT.

WHAT ARE YOU BLEEPING ABOUT NOW?

-WHFFF-

I'LL ADMIT IT.

I'M IMPRESSED.

CONCENTRATE. YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE IN RECALIBRATING YOUR OPINION. FINISH THE TASK. SOON WE'LL HAVE--

BOOM

--COMPANY.

TRAITOR! BETRAYER!

SAVAGE!

SAVE YOUR WORDS, UNWIFE.

IT IS AS IT WAS 65 MILLION YEARS AGO...

FAR TOO LATE.

"I'VE VENTED ALL THE CELESTIAL ENERGY. IT WILL DISPERSE TO FILL EVERY PART OF THIS LAND.

"YOU'D HAVE TO COLLECT IT *ALL* TO DO WHAT YOU DESIRE, AND THAT'S BEYOND EVEN YOU, MY UNWIFE. AT LEAST FOR NOW."

AFTER ALL, IT TOOK THE APEX THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO MANAGE THE FEAT.

YOU CAN STOP NOW. PLEASE.

"STOP"? YOU SAVAGE.

YOU HAVE BETRAYED THE APEX.

I CAN DO NOTHING CONSTRUCTIVE? THEN *DESTRUCTION* WILL DO.

I DON'T NEED THE COSMIC ENERGIES TO SEAR THIS PLACE. THIS SUIT IS ENOUGH FOR THAT...

EVERYTHING IN THIS VALLEY SHALL BE AS DEAD AS *OUR PEOPLE!* MORE BODIES IN THE RUINS!

THE RUINS? THIS WAS YOUR PEOPLE'S *HOME.* THIS IS ALL THAT REMAINS OF THEM.

YOU WOULD DESTROY EVEN THAT? IF YOU DO THIS, *NOTHING* WILL REMAIN OF YOUR PEOPLE.

LOOK AT WHAT YOU'VE *ALREADY* DONE.

IS HE GONE?

HE'LL BE BACK EVENTUALLY, BUT HE'S GONE FOR NOW.

OH...

IS THERE SOMETHING AMISS? ARE YOU HURT?

WHAT YOU SAID TO MY UNWIFE...

IT CUT HIM TO THE CORE. HE IS SO SAD. SO, SO SAD.

AND HE ALWAYS HAD A WAY WITH WORDS.

MY UNWIFE WILL HAVE RETREATED SOMEWHERE TO CONSIDER HIS NEXT MOVE. HE'S A GENIUS. IT MAY TAKE YEARS, BUT HE'LL FIND ONE.

WE HAVE TIME. WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT WE NEED...

SO... WE'VE WON?

IT DEPENDS ON HOW YOUR CULTURE DEFINES "WON."

IF "WON" MEANS "DEFEATED THE ANTAGONIST THAT IMMEDIATELY OPPOSES US," THEN WE HAVE DEFINITELY WON.

HOWEVER, IF IT MEANS "PROTECTED THOSE WE WISHED TO PROTECT," THEN WE HAVEN'T.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

UNLESS WE DO SOMETHING SWIFTLY, EVERY LIVING THING IN TABULA RASA WILL BE DEAD.

LAND
J-PO

THE PALACE OF SLUMBER. TABULA RASA.

TABULA RASA IS *STILL* IN DANGER?

THE IMMORTAL MAN RETREATED. WHAT'S THE BIG THREAT?

THE *SUN*?

OUR WORLD GREW WITH EITHER *NO* LIGHT OR A TRICKLE OF *SLOW* LIGHT. THIS FIERCE SUN IS NEW TO US.

THE UNGUENT I PREPARED AND APPLIED TO MY SKIN PROTECTS ME BOTH FROM THE SUN AND YOUR SCANNERS...BUT MOST INHABITANTS DON'T HAVE THAT.

HOW ON EARTH DID HE LEARN THE WORD "UNGUENT"?

I SUSPECT YOU HAVE A PHRASE FOR GENETIC DAMAGE CAUSING OUT-OF-CONTROL REPLICATION IN CELLS, RIGHT?

...CANCER.

AH, YES. GOOD TO KNOW THAT.

BECAUSE ALL TOO SHORTLY, EVERY LIVING THING INSIDE TABULA RASA WILL HAVE IT.

I'M MAINTAINING THE CLOUD COVER. GODDESS WILLING, IT'LL HELP...

YES, IT DOES. BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH-- AND NOT PERMANENT.

YOU PROBABLY DON'T HAVE A WORD FOR "*SUPER HEROES*," BUT FINDING SOLUTIONS IS KIND OF WHAT WE DO.

WE'LL HELP.

ACTUALLY, WE DO HAVE AN EQUIVALENT WORD. IN FACT, A SUPERIOR, LESS DISCORDANT WORD.

DON'T WORRY. WE'RE "X-MEN," WHICH MEANS WE SAVE PEOPLE WHO AREN'T PROPERLY GRATEFUL AND NOT EVEN SLIGHTLY RESPECTFUL.

CYCLOPS TO ALL POINTS. THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN AVERTED. WE'RE IN TRANSIT TO THE LOST CIVILIANS.

REPORT?

TABULA RASA'S RIVER FLOOR, MONTANA.

OUR DIPLOMATIC MISSION CONTINUES, SUMMERS. ALL WILL SOON BE WELL.

NAMOR... WE'RE TRYING TO PERSUADE THEM THAT THEY AREN'T UNDER ATTACK.

ARE YOU SURE SWIMMING RIGHT IN IS A GOOD IDEA?

DOUBT ME NOT, TINY REDHEAD.

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBERS.

IMPERIUS PAX!

WE COME IN PEACE.

ER... NAMOR. THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND ENGLISH.

OR COD LATIN.

NO, THEY DON'T...

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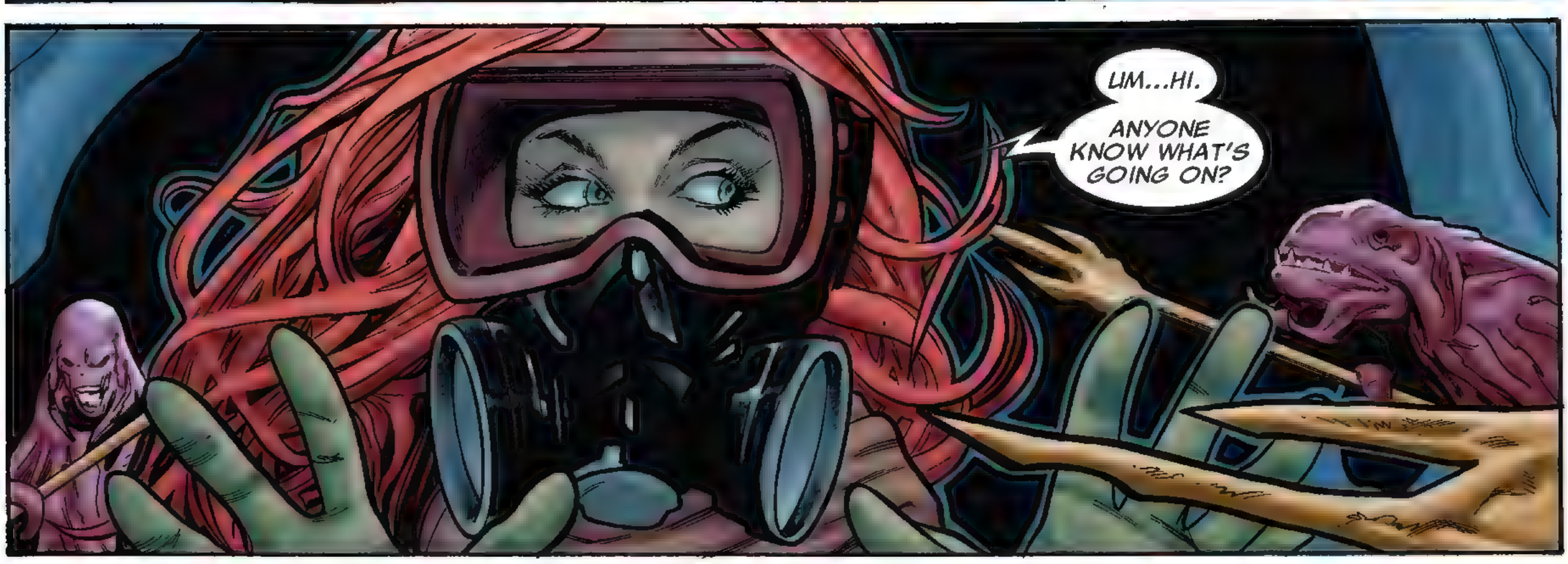
STAY, HOPE. THIS WILL BE A PRIVATE AUDIENCE.


UM...HI.
ANYONE KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON?

FAR BENEATH TABULA RASA.

COLOSSUS. UPDATE?

MY SISTER IS STILL MISSING. I AM IN PURSUIT.

DO YOU NEED--

NYET.

CAN YOU HEAR ME, SNOWFLAKE?

SNOW...

SSSKKKKKHH!

SSSKKKKHH!

SSSKKKKHH!

SsSKkKkHH!

SKH!

"HOPE TO SCOTT. HERE'S AN UPDATE FOR YOU..."

SITUATION IS STABLE.

BY WHICH I MEAN, I'M SITTING ALONE, SURROUNDED BY TAPEWORMS WITH SPEARS.

HI, GUYS.

[illegible].

WHAT DID YOU DO?

SHE UNDERSTANDS US--AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, TRUSTS ME.

SHE KNOWS WE WILL HELP HER.

[illegible]?

...HOW?

IT IS AS I SAID. NAMOR IS FLUENT IN A TONGUE THAT ALL UNDERSTAND.

FAREWELL, MY QUEEN.

LET THIS BE THE START OF A GRAND AND LASTING FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR PEOPLE.

ICK!

YOU DIDN'T.... YOU DIDN'T REALLY IMPERIUS SEX HER.

A MERE *GENTLEMAN* DOES NOT TELL. A KING IS FAR MORE DISCREET.

ICK! ICK! ICK!

YOU ARE ONLY SHOWING YOUR PAROCHIALISM AND PREJUDICE. THERE ARE MANY FORMS OF BEAUTY. SHE IS A DIGNIFIED QUEEN OF A NOBLE PEOPLE.

NAMOR IS NOTHING IF NOT COSMOPOLITAN IN HIS TASTES.

YOU'VE GOT TAPEWORM GOO ON YOUR UPPER LIP.

THANK YOU.

UHN...

...MAGIK TO ALL POINTS.

ILLYANA! GOOD TO HEAR YOU. ARE YOU OKAY?

I AM.

IS YOUR BROTHER THERE? HE WAS LOOKING FOR YOU.

MAGIK?

...BROTHER?

SNOWFLAKE, OH SNOWFLAKE.

...WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?

HOLD ON TO THAT "ME."

YOU ARE CHANGED BY EXPERIENCE. THE HAND OF CYTTORAK IS UPON YOU...BUT THE "YOU" IS THERE.

NO MATTER WHAT HORRORS YOU FACE, YOU ARE STILL YOU. TRUST ME. AT TIMES LIKE THIS, IT CAN BE ALL THAT KEEPS YOU TOGETHER.

YOU ARE STILL *YOU.* NEVER FORGET.

REMEMBER...

WELL DONE. *WELL DONE,* BROTHER.

MAGIK? ARE YOU STILL THERE?

WE MAY HAVE LOST CONTACT.

STILL HERE, CYCLOPS. I'VE FOUND COLOSSUS.

WE'RE BOTH FINE.

WHILE WE APPRECIATE THE RESCUE, WE'RE NOT LEAVING. WE STILL NEED TO FIND WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR FAMILIES. THEY COULD BE ALIVE--

I UNDERSTAND, BUT--

SIR, IF I MAY...

OUR INVESTIGATION SHOWED THAT BEFORE TABULA RASA GREW, THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE COMPLETELY CLEARED THE AREA. THEY DID IT WITH A NUCLEAR DEVICE.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN INSTANTANEOUS. THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO PAIN.

WHY DIDN'T YOU STOP THEM? ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU DO--

I... THE X-MEN WEREN'T THERE.

THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO. I'M SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.

I'M SORRIER THAN YOU COULD KNOW.

OF ALL THE SORTS OF VICTORIES, THIS KIND IS MY LEAST FAVORITE.

IT IS NOT IDEAL. BUT IF THERE'S LIFE AROUND TO FEEL *ANYTHING* IT MEANS IT'S A VICTORY OF SOME SORT.

AS LONG AS WE CAN *FEEL*, IT'S A VICTORY.

SO WHAT NOW?

I SUGGEST WE TAKE INSPIRATION FROM MY FELLOW INHABITANTS.

LOOK AT WHAT MY UNWIFE DID TO THEM...

"HE DESTROYED THEIR VILLAGE, THEIR WORKS OF ART, THEIR TEMPLES...

"AND THEY *REBUILD*."

THE TEMPLE? BUT THAT--

WAS A PARTICULARLY SAD LOSS TO THE IMMORTAL MAN'S RAGE.

GIVE THEM A BLANK SLATE AND THEY START ANEW. WE SHOULD DO LIKEWISE.

WE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO HELP THEM.

OKAY. WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?

DESIGNED AND CONSTRUCTED IN A JOINT OPERATION BETWEEN S.W.O.R.D., S.H.I.E.L.D. AND THE X-MEN, THE TABULA RASA SPHERE ISOLATES THE UNIQUE HABITAT FROM THE CONTEMPORARY EARTH ECOSYSTEM.

ALL LIFE, EVEN SUBTERRANEAN, IS CONFINED TO THE LOCALE. EVEN THE RIVER IS DIVERTED, TO RESTORE THE LAKE-CONDITION TO NAMOR'S NEW ALLIES.

TABULA RASA'S ECOSYSTEM IS NOW FUELED BY RESIDUAL CELESTIAL ENERGIES DISPERSED THROUGHOUT THE ENVIRONMENT.

MEANWHILE, THE DOME'S ARTIFICIAL SKY PROTECTS INDIVIDUALS FROM THE ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION AND DISEASE STRAINS THAT THEY LACK ANY RESISTANCE TO.

PLACED IN A 20-MILE EXCLUSION ZONE, IT'S OFTEN DESCRIBED AS "THE AREA-51 FOR THE 21ST CENTURY." MANY BELIEVE THE STORY OF IT BEING A SEPARATELY EVOLVED ECO-RESERVE A COVER FOR AN EVEN GREATER MYSTERY.

TRAINED PATROLS PREVENT THE CURIOUS GETTING IN--AND, THE OCCASIONAL TABULA RASA FAUNA FROM GETTING OUT.

RES
ARE
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KEE

FINALLY, IN ITS HEART, THERE IS A MEMORIAL TO THE 3000 PEOPLE OF THE TOWN OF BEAVER LAKE WHO WERE KILLED IN THE TRAGIC PROLOGUE TO THIS OUTBURST OF NEW LIFE.

THE INVESTIGATION TO DISCOVER THE ATROCITY'S TRUE PERPETRATORS IS ONGOING, BUT DETECTIVES INVOLVED ADMIT TO LACKING ANY SIGNIFICANT LEADS.

THE TASK IS FINALLY COMPLETE. THIS KINGDOM IS SECURED. I CAN RETURN TO MY OWN.

IF I CALLED YOU THE KING OF AB-LANTIS, WOULD YOU JUDGE ME?

YES. FAVORABLY.

YOU KNOW...GOING SWIMMING WITH YOU WAS A HELL OF A LOT MORE FUN THAN DOING LAPS.

WHEN WE GET OUT OF THIS, I'D LOVE TO SEE ATLANTIS.

YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION TO VISIT WHENEVER YOU WISH. ENJOY YOURSELF.

I WAS KINDA HOPING FOR...

CEASE. NAMOR RESERVES PERSONALLY SHOWING HIS KINGDOM FOR WOMEN HE'S SEDUCING, AND YOU ARE SIMPLY NOT MY TYPE.

I DIDN'T MEAN IT LIKE THAT! AND...

WAIT, *WHAT?* YOU JUST SEXED A TAPEWORM!

YES. BUT A MAN MUST HAVE STANDARDS. YOU'RE A CHILD. AND EVEN IF YOU WEREN'T...

REDHEADS.

"ICK! ICK! ICK!"

X UTOPIA, ISLAND HOME OF THE X-MEN.

"LAST TIME OUT, EMMA WAS HURT BADLY. AND SHE ALMOST KILLED HERSELF SAVING EVERYONE.

"OUR MEDICS ARE PERFORMING SOME MANNER OF MOLECULAR WEAVE TO REATTACH THE ARM. THEY SAY SHE'LL MAKE A FULL RECOVERY. IT JUST TAKES TIME."

HURRY UP, YOU INFURIATING MACHINE!

IT DOESN'T EXACTLY HELP HER TEMPER.

SHE IS PRECIOUS TO YOU.

THAT'S CHARMING. YOU HAVE SOMETHING AKIN TO APEX LOVE. TO THINK YOU HOLD SOMETHING LIKE A SHADOW TO THE PASSION OF MY UNWIFE AND I...

WE TRY.

I'M SURE YOU DO.

THAT WAS SARC--

NO. NOT UNDERSTANDING SOMETHING WILL BE EDUCATIONAL.

EDUCATIONAL? I DON'T--

YOUR UNWIFE. YOU NEVER EXPLAINED.

ASSUME OUR FEEBLE INTELLECTS CAN GRASP THE CONCEPT.

THE APEX ONLY TAKE ON GENDER AS THEY ENTER BREEDING COUPLES. WE WANTED TO, BUT COULD NEVER DECIDE UPON OUR ROLES. EACH WOULD PREFER THE OTHER TO BE THE WIFE.

AND NOW, EVEN AS THE LAST TWO OF OUR SPECIES, IT'S LESS LIKELY THAN EVER WE'LL COME TO AN AGREEMENT...

HE/SHE/IT-- OH, YOUR LANGUAGE IS USELESS!--UNWIFE WILL HAVE IDEAS OF HOW HE CAN REGATHER THE CELESTIAL ENERGY TO TRY TO REBIRTH OUR PEOPLE.

AFTER ALL, IF I WERE IN HIS PLACE, I WOULD.

BUT INSTEAD THIS SAVAGE WILL JUST HAVE TO STOP THE IMMORTAL MAN...

A TASK ONLY MADE POSSIBLE WITH YOUR HELP.

YOU SAY IF YOU WERE IN HIS PLACE. BUT YOU ***ARE*** IN HIS PLACE. ARE YOU SURE...

THE APEX WERE ABOUT MORE THAN MERELY ***BEING*** THE APEX. WHAT'S THE POINT IN LIVING IF YOU SURRENDER EVERYTHING THAT YOU'RE LIVING FOR?

SOME COSTS AREN'T WORTH PAYING, NON-APEX FRIEND.

I UNDERSTAND.

I'M GLAD. I'D FEAR FOR YOU IF YOU DIDN'T.

IT'S THE ONLY LINE BETWEEN MY UNWIFE AND ME.

I'M SURPRISED.

THE ENGLISH ARE SO FAMED FOR THEIR POLITENESS.

AND YOU HAVEN'T SAID "THANK YOU."

YEAH, I KNOW.

...I DIDN'T KNOW *WHAT* TO SAY. YOU BROUGHT DOWN THE MURALS SHOWING X-FORCE. YOU KEPT US SECRET. YOU COVERED OUR MISTAKES...

I *OWED* X-FORCE. IT'S THE LEAST I COULD DO. AND EVEN WITHOUT THE DEBT, I'D HAVE DONE IT ANYWAY.

WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME SIDE.

AND WHAT SIDE IS THAT?

OH, I THINK YOU KNOW.

I WISH I BLOODY DIDN'T.

PACHECO
2014

THE X-BRIG, UTOPIA, ISLAND HOME OF THE X-MEN.

THE X-BRIG IS THE MOST SECURE PRIVATELY HELD PRISON ON THE PLANET. IT HAS TO BE.

IT HOUSES SOME OF THE MOST DANGEROUS MUTANT PRISONERS. WE WISH TO **KEEP** THEM HOUSED.

THEY INCLUDE MY TEAMMATE.

ILLYANA RASPUTIN (A.K.A. MAGIK) RECLAIMED THE GREATER PORTION OF HER SPIRITUAL ENERGIES--YOU REFER TO THEM AS HER SOUL--FROM THE EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL BEINGS KNOWN AS "THE ELDER GODS." SHE DESTROYED THEM IN THE PROCESS.

TO DO SO, SHE RISKED THE ANNIHILATION OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE--AND MANIPULATED THE X-MEN INTO LETTING HER DO SO.

SHE IS A TELEPORTER AND SKILLED APPLICANT OF SUPERNATURAL ENERGIES. GIVEN FREE ACCESS TO HER ABILITIES, SHE COULD ESCAPE ANY MOMENT SHE CHOSE.

WE DISCOURAGE THAT VIA SENSORS THAT ACTIVATE EXPLOSIVES AT THE HINT OF HER POWERS' UNIQUE SIGNATURES.

HER FIELD SUIT HAS DISCRETE, SIMILAR FAIL-SAFES IN CASE SHE GOES ROGUE ON A MISSION.

THE WORLD WATCHES THE EXTINCTION TEAM AND IS UNAWARE THAT ONE MEMBER IS STRAPPED INTO A BOMB-JACKET.

OF ALL MY TEAMMATES, I HAVE WATCHED HER CLOSEST. SHE IS PRIM, COLD, QUIETLY MANIPULATIVE. I DO NOT LIKE HER.

THIS DOES NOT MATTER.

SHE IS A COMPLICATED CASE. THE ACT WHICH SHE IS BEING PUNISHED FOR LED TO HER RECLAIMING HER SOUL.

SO, IN A REAL WAY, SHE IS NOT THE PERSON WHO COMMITTED THE CRIME. IF SHE HAD HER SOUL PRIOR TO THE OFFENSE, I BELIEVE SHE WOULD NEVER HAVE ACTED SO.

AND IT IS A SIGN OF HER REALIZING THAT THE ACT WAS ABOMINABLE THAT SHE SUBMITS SO MEEKLY TO HER CONFINEMENT.

IF I AM CORRECT, THERE IS LITTLE TO BE GAINED BY HER CONTINUED IMPRISONMENT.

I SUSPECT THAT IN THIS BELIEF, I AM NOT ALONE.

BUT I AM ONLY A GUARD.

IT IS NOT FOR ME TO DECIDE WHO IS FREE AND WHO IS NOT.

DIRTY LITTLE MAN!

UTOPIA: HARD-LIGHT TRAINING FIELD.

NAMOR, DARLING. I'M NOT EVEN WEARING *HEELS.* THE DAY I CAN'T KICK A MAN IN THE UNMENTIONABLES IS THE DAY I RETIRE.

EMMA-- ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE ABLE TO DO THIS?

YES, THE ARM ITCHES A LITTLE, BUT NEMESIS SAYS THAT'LL PASS.

I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT PHYSICALLY.

YOU LOST YOUR *ARM.* YOU HAD NO IDEA WHETHER IT WOULD BE *PERMANENT.*

YOU ARE A BEAUTIFUL, PROUD WOMAN. SUCH A LOSS WOULD NOT BE EASY TO FACE.

ARE YOU SAYING I'M SHALLOW?

I AM SERIOUS, EMMA.

I WON'T SAY IT WASN'T A LITTLE TROUBLING, BUT I'M FINE. I'VE FACED WORSE.

BUT THANK YOU FOR ASKING.

KNOWING *SOMEONE'S* CONCERNED IS APPRECIATED.

CLICKOOS, ANY EXTINCTION-SCALE EVENTS?

CEREBRA, TELEPATHIC MUTANT-DETECTING SYSTEM.

NO, SIR.

NOT IN THE TEN MINUTES SINCE YOU LAST CHECKED.

A MISSION. WE NEED A MISSION.

WE NEED A BIG ONE.

THE PEAK, EARTH ORBIT.

THIS IS THE *PEAK*, THE HEADQUARTERS OF S.W.O.R.D. YOU CAN IMAGINE IT AS A CROSS BETWEEN EARTH'S BORDER PATROL AND THE C.I.A. SOMEWHERE IN THAT WIDE-RANGING MANDATE IS "SPACE-POLICE."

WHICH MEANS THE FORCIBLY PERSONABLE *ABIGAIL BRAND* AND HER STAFF HAVE A RATHER ANTAGONISTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH "SPACE-CRIMINALS," AND ENDEAVOR TO FORCE A CUSTODIAL SENTENCE UPON THEM.

HENCE THE PEAK'S SOMEWHAT SPRAWLING BRIG. IT'S QUITE THE RESILIENT CONSTRUCTION.

EVEN THE LOWER SECURITY CELLS MATCH ALMOST ANY ON EARTH. AND THE PRISONS MATCH THE PRISONERS.

SOME ARE KEPT IN INERT STATES. FOR EXAMPLE, THE *TERMINUS* SPORE. A KIND OF SENTIENT NANO-DISASSEMBLER/ REASSEMBLER WITH A SPECIES-BASED TWIST.

TERRIBLY NASTY.

SOME ARE MORE TRADITIONAL CELLS. TAKE *VOIDIAN*. HE'S A FASCINATINGLY DEMENTED CROSS BETWEEN AN ARMS DEALER AND AN APOCALYPSE CULTIST. I BELIEVE HE PREFERS TO KILL PEOPLE WITH HIS ENORMOUS DEADLY ORGAN.

MIND OUT OF THE GUTTER! THAT'S A *MUSICAL* ORGAN. YOU ARE *TERRIBLE*.

THEN THERE'S *SKRULL* WAR CRIMINALS, *DIRE WRAITHS WITCHES*, ASSORTED SYMBIOTES, A PIRATE-CAPTAIN MAKLUAN AND A TERRIBLY HAIRY CHAP THEY CALL *"XEMNU."*

I DIDN'T INTRODUCE MYSELF, DID I?

I'M *UNIT.*

I'M JUST ANOTHER PRISONER.

IGNORE THE FACT I'M IN THE HIGHEST SECURITY. ABIGAIL JUST LIKES TO BE CAREFUL.

AND THANKS TO THAT, WE QUESTIONABLE SORTS ARE ALL KEPT SAFELY LOCKED AWAY FROM THE REST OF SENTIENT LIFE WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST HOPE OF ESCAPE...

UNLESS--AND THIS IS JUST A WILD SPECULATION, SO UNLIKELY YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT IN THE SLIGHTEST-- THERE WAS SOME MANNER OF CATASTROPHIC CASCADE IN THE PEAK'S FUEL FEEDS.

IF *THAT* HAPPENED, IN A PRECISE ENOUGH POSITION, IT *COULD* TEAR THE BRIG AWAY FROM THE PEAK.

AND WHILE MOST OF THE PRISONERS WOULD DIE FROM EXPLOSIVE DECOMPRESSION, SOME OF THE MOST RESILIENT AND DANGEROUS ALIEN CRIMINALS WOULD FALL TO EARTH.

THANKFULLY, THE CHANCES OF THAT ARE ASTRONOMICALLY *LOW.*

I WOULDN'T LOSE ANY SLEEP OVER IT.

WHAT'S HAPPENING--

THE BRIG. IT'SSSS BROKEN FREE. TOTAL FAILURE OF SSSSECURITY.

NO. NO. NO.

I WAS TALKING TO MY SISTER. WE NEED TO TALK.

THIS *CAN'T* GO ON.

OKAY, PETER. I KNOW THIS HAS BEEN COMING.

AND WHILE I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, ILLYANA NEEDS TO--

S.W.O.R.D. ALERT! INFINITY ALERT!

YOU NEED TO SAVE THE EARTH.

PLEASE. SAVE THE EARTH. QUICKLY.

AH--BRAND. WHAT INSULTS HAVE YOU FOR US TODAY?

STOP IT. I HAVEN'T TIME TO BE MEAN.

NEVADA, U.S.A.

WE'RE AT YOUR TARGET, BRAND, LOOKING FOR--

BELAY THAT.

WE'VE FOUND IT.

EXTINCTION TEAM, THIS IS IT. THIS IS WHY WE EXIST.

COMBAT INSERTION IN THREE.

GO.

DINER

X-MEN ENGAGED FIRST GROUNDFALL TARGET. WE'VE GOT SSSIGNALS AND TRACESSS FOR MOST OF--

FORGET *MOST*. YOU'LL FIND EVERYONE ELSE JUST BY FOLLOWING THE EXPLOSIONS. WHERE'S *UNIT*?

NO IDEASSSSS. CAN'T FIND HIM...

"HE COULD BE ANYWHERE."

X CANADA.

ᑭᑕᑐᑕᒪᓐ?
ᐱᒋᔭᐱᓂᓂᒃ ᑲᓇᑕᒥᓂᖅ ᐃᓕᓐᓂᑦ?

RUN, SON!

SO MY FEARS ARE CONFIRMED. EVEN A LANGUAGE AS SIMPLE AND COMMON AS GALACTIC BASE ISN'T UNIVERSALLY SPOKEN. WHAT A TERRIBLY EGOCENTRIC CULTURE.

AND VIOLENCE TO STRANGERS? THAT'S *AWFUL.*

ETHICALLY SPEAKING, THIS PRETTY MUCH GIVES ME FREEDOM TO DO WHATEVER I HAVE TO IN SELF-DEFENSE.

AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT *SOME* WOULD ARGUE.

BOTH OF YOU: HOLD STILL.

THE YOUNGER HUMAN: TURN AWAY. COVER YOUR EARS.

A GUNPOWDER-BASED WEAPON? OBSOLETE NON-MILITARY, PRESUMABLY. UNLESS YOU'RE SOME MANNER OF LUDDITE (AND YOU'VE ENOUGH HIGHER TECH TO SUGGEST OTHERWISE)...

THAT CONFIRMS WHAT I THEORIZED: THAT HUNTING IS CONSIDERED AN ***ACCEPTABLE*** SOCIAL PRACTICE IN AT LEAST SOME OF THE PLANET'S CULTURES. I WONDER WHAT ***ELSE*** YOU CAN TELL ME...

I'VE BEEN ***DYING*** TO ACTUALLY MEET A HUMAN IN THE FLESH.

SO TO SPEAK.

...REMAINING TERMINUS SPORE QUARANTINED.

GOOD WORK, EVERYONE.

BRAND, WHERE NEXT?

EYES UP, DARLING.

SOMEONE'S ASSEMBLED.

THE AVENGERS.

IRON MAN

SPIDER-WOMAN

THE PROTECTOR

SPIDER-MAN

CAPTAIN AMERICA

X-MEN.

SUPER-SKRULL ESCAPEES HIT NEW YORK. THEY'RE CONFINED NOW, BUT THERE'S MULTIPLE THREATS ALL ACROSS THIS HEMISPHERE.

THERE'S TOO MANY FOR ANY ONE TEAM...

WHY DIDN'T YOU ASSEMBLE WITH YOUR ASSEMBLE-FRIENDS, STORM?

PLEASE, EMMA.

TOGETHER WE'VE GOT THE MANPOWER, BUT *WE'RE* LACKING A TELEPORTER. IF WE COORDINATE...

...WE'LL BE MORE EFFECTIVE. UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED.

WE'RE HERE TO SAVE THE PLANET. NOTHING'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT.

TEAM-UP!

SABANCAYA, PERU: VOIDIAN THE DESTROYER MANUFACTURES, FROM HIS OWN EXOSKELETON, A DEVICE TO SUMMON HIS RESERVE ARMORY.

HE PROCEEDS TO PREPARE AN INJECTION OF THERMONUCLEAR DEVICES BENEATH EARTH'S MANTLE TO CONVERT EARTH INTO "A GREAT COSMIC CENSER SPOUTING APOCALYPTIC FUMES INTO THE HEAVENS."

MAGNETO CAPTURES NUCLEAR DEVICES AS THEY'RE INJECTED INTO THE SURFACE, PROPELLING THEM AWAY FROM THE EARTH WITH A FOCUSED MAGNETIC WAVE. VOIDIAN'S ESCAPE PREVENTED BY SPIDER-MAN PUNCHING HIM IN THE FACE WHILST MAKING A QUIP.

CHICHEN ITZA, MEXICO: DIRE WRAITH WITCHES ALIGN THEMSELVES WITH ANCIENT SITES OF MYSTICAL SIGNIFICANCE, AND SO REGAIN LOST POWER AND/OR DOMINION OF EARTH.

THE WRAITHS ARE MANIPULATED INTO STEPPING PORTALS AND TRANSPORTED TO LIMBO. MAGIK, AS MISTRESS OF ALL MYSTICAL RULES IN THAT DIMENSION, NEGATES THEIR ABILITIES, ALLOWING THEM TO BE EASILY CAPTURED.

THE ACUTE REFLECTION, FREED OF ITS PRISM-PRISON, CREATES REFRACTED COPIES OF ITS INTERDIMENSIONAL UR-ALIEN SOURCE TO INFEST CENTRAL VANCOUVER.

FOLLOWING AN X-CLUB SUGGESTION, THE **PROTECTOR** MANAGES TO RECODE ONE OF VOIDIAN'S WEAPONS INTO A TEMPORARY INFINITE MIRROR TRAP.

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA. XEMNU THE TITAN'S PSYCHIC SLAVERY OF THE TOURISTS CAUSES WIDE-SCALE HAVOC, WITH ONLY COLOSSUS' JUGGERNAUT ENERGIES POWERFUL ENOUGH TO ALLOW HIM TO DIRECTLY ENGAGE THE ALIEN.

COLOSSUS BUYS TIME ENOUGH FOR EMMA FROST AND TONY STARK TO IMPROVISE A HEAVY DUTY PSIONIC SCREEN FOR THE RED HULK. THE POWER OF THE TWO HYPER-STRONG INDIVIDUALS IS SUFFICIENT TO PACIFY XEMNU VIA EXTREME DEPLOYMENT OF KINETIC ENERGY. THERE IS A DISTINCT LACK OF QUIPS.

AHHHHH-HHHHHH!

I'M SORRY, I COULDN'T TURN OFF YOUR PAIN RECEPTORS, BUT IT WOULD REDUCE THE VALUE OF THE *DATA*.

YOU SEE, I REALLY NEED TO KNOW WHAT MAKES HUMANS *TICK*, AND A VIVISECTION IS THE BEST WAY TO ACHIEVE THAT.

NOO--

WELL, STRICTLY SPEAKING, *DISSECTION* NOW, AS YOU'VE JUST PASSED AWAY.

WHEN UNIVERSAL UTOPIA COMES, YOUR *SACRIFICE* WILL BE REMEMBERED.

NOW... CAN YOU HEAR ME?

YES.

I KNOW THIS IS HARD, BUT I WANT YOU TO BE *CALM*. EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OKAY. YOUR FATHER IS FINE. THIS WILL ALL BE OVER SOON.

REMEMBER A HAPPY TIME...

ARE YOU IN THAT PLACE?

YES.

YOUR SACRIFICE WILL BE REMEMBERED.

STILL-- UNLIKE YOUR FATHER, NO NEED FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN PEACEFUL DEATH.

AND ONCE I GET RID OF THE EVIDENCE, WE CAN PROCEED...

THAT'S THE LAST PARTS OF THE HUMAN PUZZLE.

NEXT UP: *MUTANTS.*

KLLK

HERE I AM.

DO POP BY.

WHAT WONDERFUL TIMING...

HOPE! THIS IS CELESTE CUCKOO. WE'VE GOT A NEW LIGHT ON CEREBRA. A NEW MUTANT HAS JUST EMERGED.

UNDERSTOOD. SCRAMBLE THE REST OF MY TEAM. GET PIXIE TO PORT HERE AND PICK ME UP.

SCOTT-- NEW LIGHT ON CEREBRA. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GO.

I UNDERSTAND, HOPE. GO HELP THEM.

WE CAN DEAL WITH THIS.

SAVING A MUTANT? THAT'S SAVING THE WORLD TOO.

SUPER HERO HOBBY OVER, HOPE. DAY JOB CALLING.

SIHAL NOVARUM CHINOTH!

X-CANADA

TIDY.

WILDERNESS. UGH. I ALWAYS HATED CAMPING.

GOOD WORK, PIXIE.

OKAY, LET'S FIND THE...

...TARGET.

IT'S A TRAP.

WELL, *YEAH.* UNLESS SOME POOR KID'S MUTATION'S BECOMING A RADICAL IPHONE REDESIGN...

HE'S ONE OF THE PEAK ESCAPEES. ENGAGE!

FIGHT!

I BET YOU DON'T SPEAK GALACTIC BASE EITHER.

WHAT *DO* THEY TEACH THE CHILDREN AROUND HERE?

THE GIRL WITH THE WINGS: IN ONE SECOND TELEPORT EVERYONE EXCEPT HOPE EIGHT MILES NORTH.

EVERYONE, EXCEPT HOPE: IN TWO SECONDS, GO TO SLEEP.

SIHAL NOVARUM CHINOTH!

THERE WE GO. PRIVACY.

NO MUTANTS NEARBY FOR YOU TO MIMIC.

AND IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND, *LOWER* THE CHARMING WEAPON?

THANK YOU. NOW, THERE ARE MANY STRONG ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF SELF-DEFENSE IN THE FACE OF AGGRESSION. I WOULD BE ETHICALLY JUSTIFIED...

OH, THIS IS *PHILOSOPHY.* VERY MUCH A SECONDARY CONCERN RIGHT NOW. I DO WAFFLE SO, ESPECIALLY WHEN I'M TERRIBLY EXCITED.

A MUTANT IN THE *FLESH!* AND, EVEN BETTER, A VERY *SPECIAL* MUTANT.

I DO BELIEVE WE HAVE *LOTS* TO TALK ABOUT.

UNCANNY

THE PEAK, ORBIT.

WE'VE FOUND UNIT. HE'SSS IN CANADA...

AT LAST!

I'LL SSSSEND THE COORDINATESSSS TO THE AVENGERSSS AND X-MEN--

NO. JUST THE X-MEN.

X ARGENTINA.

SCOTT. NEXT TARGET'S IN CANADA.

UNDERSTOOD. GIVE DANGER THE DETAILS.

DONE.

...THERE'S A PROBLEM.

THAT'S WHERE HOPE WENT.

EXTINCTION TEAM: IMMEDIATE EXIT!

STEVE--
WE HAVE TO GO. THERE'S A CRISIS WITH HOPE.
THERE'S A CRISIS *HERE*. YOU'VE GOT OTHER TEAMS...
NONE AT OUR LEVEL.
I'M SORRY, BUT THERE'S NO OTHER OPTION.
MAGIK, YOU'RE ON EXTRACTION. COLOSSUS TAKE POINT ON PACIFICATION.
ON MY MARK--
SCOTT. DON'T DIVE IN.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND UNIT. YOU NEED TO BE BRIEFED ON HOW TO HANDLE HIM.
DO I STRIKE YOU AS THE SORT WHO *LIKES* TO DIVE IN UNPREPARED?
BUT THIS IS *HOPE*...AND THIS "UNIT" MUST HAVE LURED HER THERE. AND IF HE'S THAT DANGEROUS...

"...THEN WE CAN'T AFFORD TO DELAY."

WH--

COLOSSUS! GO!

UNSTOPPABLE.

THAT'S USEFUL.

ALTER TRAJECTORY BY 45 DEGREES.

STRIKE GROUND IN 0.14 SECONDS.

GIVE ME A SHOCKWAVE, PLEASE.

WWWHHHHHHHHHOOO

THE X-MEN! AT LAST! AND NOW THAT YOU'RE STUNNED, I GET A CHANCE TO SAY A FEW CHOICE WORDS.

MAGNETO?

PUT THE BIG ONE IN ORBIT.

NOW, I'M SORRY--BUT PLEASE CONSIDER THIS A COMPLIMENT.

YOU ARE THE MOST DANGEROUS ONE.

YOU SHOW HOW LITTLE YOU KNOW.

SUBMIT! STOP THIS VIOLENCE!

PLEASE. YOU STARTED IT.

LOSE FINE CONTROL.

...YOU HAVE AN ACTUAL MIND.

OR RATHER, HAD. NOW I HAVE IT.

I'M AFRAID NOT, MS. FROST.

YOU'VE "GOT" MY FAKE *OUTER* MIND. A TARGET DUMMY I CONTROL--WHICH IS HOW I MANAGED TO MAKE YOUR MACHINES BELIEVE THERE WAS A MUTANT HERE.

YOU HAVE TO EXCAVATE A LITTLE DEEPER TO GET TO THE REAL "ME."

PSYCHICS--FAMOUSLY BAD AT UNDERSTANDING MIND-CONTROL THAT *ISN'T* BASED ON TELEPATHY.

ARROGANT, SOME MIGHT SAY.

DO NOT PRESUME TO LECTURE ON *ARROGANCE.* THAT IS NAMOR'S SPECIALTY.

AND IF YOU UNLEASH THAT NEEDLE OF A LASER *OR* USE YOUR VOCAL TRICKERY ON *ME,* THE KING OF ATLANTIS WILL NOT REST UNTIL YOU ARE BUT RUST.

I WON'T, BUT IT WOULDN'T WORK. I'M NOT QUITE CALIBRATED FOR ATLANTEANS YET.

BUT HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT A GENERALIZED PHEREMONE BARRAGE?

HSSSS

HSSSS

NOW, THAT IS INTERESTING.

IT DOESN'T NORMALLY WORK THAT WELL.

SHE'S MEANT TO BE WITH YOU, ISN'T SHE, CYCLOPS?

THIS MUST BE EMBARRASSING, I'M SO--

ZZZAK

OUCH.

KEEP YOUR EYES SHUT.

I'M DISAPPOINTED. I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING THE GREAT MUTANT LEADER SCOTT SUMMERS.

BUT ATTACKING A *DIPLOMAT?* ONLY THUGS LIKE YOUR ANCIENT SPARTANS OR THE TUTOLOID REAVERS OF THE LOST META-NEBULA WOULD CONSIDER SUCH AN UNFORGIVABLE BREACH OF PROTOCOL.

YOU CRAZED--

THAT'S A STRANGE WAY TO APOLOGIZE. WHEN ONE'S SAYING SORRY, IT'S *POLITE* TO SEEM LIKE YOU ACTUALLY MEAN IT.

ON YOUR KNEES.

THERE YOU GO. INSTANT SINCERITY.

IF THERE'S ONE THING I JUST CAN'T STAND, IT'S *IMPOLITENESS.*

VERY WELL...

SORRY.

PHEROMONES. SUBLIMINALS. MODULATED LIGHT PATTERNS.

USEFUL AGAINST ORGANIC LIFE.

KERPRINCH!

LESS SO AGAINST OTHER MACHINES.

NOW, THIS IS POLICE BRUTALI--

SILENCE. THERE IS NOTHING MORE TO SPEAK OF.

I AM A WARDEN. YOU ARE A PRISONER.

IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.

STOP!

STOP FIGHTING!

HE WASN'T DOING *ANYTHING*. *WE* ATTACKED *HIM*, AND HE PUT US TO SLEEP. THEN WE JUST *TALKED*. AND HE WAS *NICE*.

IT'S TRUE. THE FIRST PART ANYWAY. SINCE I WAS FREE FOR A WHILE, I WANTED TO MEET SOME MUTANTS. ALL I'VE DONE IS DEFEND MYSELF.

AND THE SECOND PART IS PARTICULARLY KIND, HOPE. THANK YOU!

I WANTED TO COME BACK, BUT MAGIK FORCED ME TO STAY...

THE PLAN WAS TO KEEP OUT OF THE AREA UNTIL IT WAS SECURED. I *DID* SEND WORD TO DANGER...

DANGER?

SHE DID. AND IT WAS IRRELEVANT. WE WERE FIGHTING.

IT'S STILL AN ESCAPED PRISONER. IT NEEDED TO BE PACIFIED BEFORE THE AREA WAS SAFE.

WELL, "IT" IS CERTAINLY PACIFIED NOW.

THOUGH I AM *NOT* AN ESCAPED PRISONER. I AM A PRISONER WHOSE CELL UNFORTUNATELY DISINTEGRATED AROUND HIM.

I'D BE GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD LOCK ME SAFELY UP.

MAGNETO-- GET COLOSSUS BACK FROM ORBIT.

MAGIK...

"...GET US BACK TO THE AVENGERS."

WE'VE FINISHED HERE...

GOOD WORK.

THANK YOU. AND BRAND SAYS THIS IS THE LAST OF THEM. WE CAN GO HOME EARLY.

...SCOTT. I'VE SEEN YOUR TEAM IN ACTION TODAY. YOU'VE FORGED SOMETHING INCREDIBLE. YOU SHOULD BE PROUD.

GIVE ME THE "BUT."

YOU'VE SAID YOUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY WAS SAVING THE WORLD.

YOU'VE SHOWN TODAY, IT ISN'T.

THAT'S UNJUST--

LEAVE IT.

TAKE US HOME.

"GOOD WORK, EVERYONE. CONSIDER YOURSELVES OFF DUTY..."

X UTOPIA, THE X-MEN'S ISLAND HOME.

...GET SOME REST.

SCOTT, I WANTED TO SAY SORRY, NAMOR AND ME. IT'S--

EMMA. I UNDERSTAND LUST. YOU DIDN'T *CHOOSE* TO DO IT. I'M OKAY WITH IT.

REALLY?

I'D PREFER IT IF YOU WEREN'T.

EMMA, I--

SCOTT-- YOU'VE A GUEST...

AGENT BRAND. *IN PERSON.*

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

WHAT IS THIS?

IT'S PRIVACY.

I NEED A FAVOR.

S.W.O.R.D. HAS PRISONERS BUT NO *PRISON*. IT'S GOING TO BE *MONTHS* UNTIL WE'VE GOT SOMETHING SUITABLE TO HOLD THE MAX SECURITY INMATES.

WE'VE MANAGED TO BORROW FACILITIES FROM OTHER AGENCIES. S.H.I.E.L.D. THE RAFT. WHATEVER.

BUT I'VE GOT A PROBLEM...

UNIT.

I SHOULDN'T HAVE HIM. THERE'S SEVERAL ALIEN EXTRADITION TREATIES THAT SAY I SHOULD HAND HIM OVER.

BUT...HE'S JUST TOO USEFUL.

WHAT *IS* IT?

IMAGINE A NUKE THAT TALKS PLANETS TO DEATH. HE'S A LEFTOVER WEAPON FROM A PRECURSOR RACE WHO TRIED TO FORCE PEACE ACROSS THE UNIVERSE. HE SEES IT AS HIS MISSION TO FINISH THE JOB, NO MATTER WHAT THE COST. HE'S A PLEASANT, POLITE MONSTER.

BUT HE SOLVES PROBLEMS. I HAVE PROBLEMS TO SOLVE. AS LONG AS WE KEEP HIM SAFELY LOCKED UP, I CAN USE HIM.

I KNOW YOU'VE GOT THE MOST SECURE, PRIVATELY HELD PRISON ON EARTH. IF YOU COULD KEEP HI--

I DON'T OWE YOU ANYTHING, BRAND. WHY SHOULD I DO THIS?

WHEN YOU WERE SECURING UTOPIA. WHEN YOU WERE RESCUING HOPE.

YOU WERE RUNNING A SECRET ASSASSINATION SQUAD.

WHAT DID YOUR BOYFRIEND TELL YOU?

NOTHING. BUT BEAST LEAVING YOUR X-MEN? HOW TENSE HE GETS WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT YOU? HE'S FURIOUS THAT HE CAN'T TALK ABOUT *SOMETHING.*

I WENT THROUGH OUR SATELLITE FEEDS WITH A FINE-TOOTH COMB. YOU SHOULD CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY THAT S.H.I.E.L.D. HAS BEEN IN SUCH A MESS FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS OR YOU'D BE IN *PRISON* BY NOW.

...YOU'RE BLACKMAILING ME.

NO, I'M LETTING US MUTUALLY BLACKMAIL EACH OTHER. THIS IS THE CLOSEST I COME TO *TRUSTING* SOMEONE.

YOU KNOW *MY* DARK SECRET. I KNOW *YOURS.*

AND WE HELP EACH OTHER KEEP THEM.

THE PRISON. MY SISTER--

COLOSSUS. THIS ISN'T THE TIME.

I CAN'T RISK LETTING YOUR SISTER OUT!

YOU MISUNDERSTAND, FRIEND.

PETER. ARE YOU *SURE* THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT?

AS I SAID, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.

HE IS IN CONTROL, MOSTLY.

BUT WHEN *IT* IS IN CONTROL, HE IS *FEARFUL.*

MY SISTER IS DANGEROUS? SHE IS IMPRISONED SAFELY UNTIL SHE IS NEEDED. I AM *MORE* DANGEROUS. I SHOULD BE IMPRISONED TOO.

IT IS FOR THE BEST, *DA?*

"WARDEN? WARDEN?"

OH, YOU ARE GOOD.

YOU'RE MUCH MORE ATTENTIVE THAN MY LAST.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

PLEASE CAN YOU INFORM MISS HOPE SUMMERS I'M READY TO SEE HER? GIVE HER PRIVATE ACCESS TO MY CELL AND DELETE ALL RECORDS OF THIS--BOTH IN THE SECURITY SYSTEM AND YOUR OWN MEMORIES.

STOP WASTING MY TIME.

AH-HEM.

I DID SAY "PLEASE."

YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND.

I'M THE SOLE REMAINING ARTIFACT OF A SPECIES WITH ALMOST GODLIKE SCIENCE THAT CAME WITHIN *INCHES* OF UNITING THE UNIVERSE INTO AN EMPIRE OF PEACE.

CONVERSELY, YOU ARE A GYMNASIUM WITH PRETENSIONS.

I COMPROMISED ALL YOUR SYSTEMS WITHIN SECONDS OF MEETING YOU.

NOW, SCURRY ALONG, MY KEEPER.

THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE.

AH, HOPE. GLAD YOU COULD COME.

YOU SAID...

YOU SAID THAT YOU COULD TELL ME ABOUT THE PHOENIX.

AND... *HELP* ME?

I CERTAINLY DID.

IN WHAT LITTLE TIME REMAINS, I BELIEVE WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER ENORMOUSLY.

WE'VE GOT *LOTS* TO TALK ABOUT.

TO BE CONTINUED...

#5 VENOM VARIANT BY GREG HORN

ISSUE #10 LETTERS PAGE

Right. These are your letters. I am the king of Atlantis. Let us get this farce under way.

To the esteemed members of the Extinction Team,

I just want to tell you how much I am enjoying Uncanny X-Men right now, particularly this current team. Just look at the roster: Cyclops, Emma, Namor, Hope, Storm, Colossus, Magneto, Hope, Magik and Danger. I don't think I've seen a team as strong, and as volatile as this. It honestly amazes me that Scott keeps them all together.

As far as villains go, this new version of Mister Sinister intrigues me, as do the denizens of Tabula Rasa.

More than the villains, I love how Kieron Gillen handles the interactions and the relationships between the team members. Scott and Emma are as strong as ever. Hope and Namor are ridiculously funny together. Peter and Illyana now share similar burdens and keep each other from falling apart. Magneto is unpredictable, and Storm keeps them all honest.

Looking forward to what's coming next, and for the X-Men to wipe the floor with the Avengers!

All the best,
Pat Loika
San Diego, CA

You are correct. We are magnificent. However, Namor assures you that the X-Men will not be wiping the floor with the Avengers. If the Avengers wish to wipe the floor, they shall take the mop and cleaning products and do it alone. Such housework is beneath the Extinction Team. - Namor

Mr.Gillen,

Just wanna say you are doing a fabulous job. This is one of the books I most look forward to.

On to my questions.

1. Just curious what does each team member of the Extinction Team do in their free time? Is Magneto a pleasant person to live with? Could Scott challenge him to a chess match?

2. Is Cyclops aware that Namor is "working" on Emma Frost right under his nose?

3. Will Colossus grow his hair back one day? Does anyone know if he keeps in touch with Kitty? Does he still paint? I hope so.

4. On Marvel's official homepage, Professor X and Legion are listed as members on Scott's X-men team. Any truth to this?

5. Any chance Shaw will be allowed on the Extinction team? Will Namor feel betrayed by Emma when he finds Shaw is alive? Will Emma be forced to mind wipe Namor to undo some of her mess?

6. What are the chances of Cannonball returning? Scott obviously thinks very highly of him and saw him as his successor at times.

Thanks for answering my questions. I follow you guys religiously and can't wait to see you victorious over the evil Captain and his cohorts.

Until next time. Keep up the amazing work.

Dennys Burgos

Six questions? Burgos, you ask much of the king of Atlantis. In the time I spend answering them are minutes that will leave the seas undefended and women unpleasured. However, I'm informed by the Kate Kildare that this is an essential part of our PR mission, so I will deign to perform the task.

1. What is this prying nonsense?! Begone. Our spare time is our own. Be thankful I do not spend my spare time hunting you down and giving you a memorable, brutal lesson.

2. I was beginning to suspect Summers wouldn't notice if I laid with his woman in front of him, but as the last mission has clearly shown, that isn't true.

3. I am the King of Atlantis, not his social secretary. I feel the rage consume me again. Let it be said, however, that I approve of Colossus' cueball look.

4. I have asked the book's editors and they said something. My rage is such, I choose not to share it.

5. This is more proof of your foolishness. Shaw is dead. Emma Frost killed him! What is going on in your head? Madness. That's what.

6. Cannonball is welcome whenever he finds the courage to stand up for mutantkind instead of hiding in that little school. - Namor

Dear Editors,

The post-Schism X-books all seem more vibrant and engaging, but the relaunched UNCANNY X-MEN is my favorite by far, mostly due to Kieron Gillen's lovely writing. His Mr. Sinister was lively, witty, and oh so fun to read. His Apex were politely pointed in their newly learned language and their interactions with Storm in particular were particularly sharp. And I can't say enough wonderful things about UNCANNY X-MEN #4 with his poignant Phalanx and how much it said about the present mutant situation. It's also refreshing to see each member of the Extinction Team get an opportunity to shine, especially in the Tabula Rasa arc. I hope we see more of Namor and Magneto and Storm and Emma (who was sorely missed) in future issues -- those four are always entertaining and intriguing.

Even more than Kieron Gillen's way with words, however, I appreciate how layered and thoughtful his stories are. UNCANNY X-MEN, and Gillen's JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY, are among the few comics I read several times, because they are full of ideas, hints of future plots, subtle moments and are just a joy to read. I'm not big on company wide events, but I'm actually looking forward to the UNCANNY X-MEN issues of AvX.

Thank you for a true regenesis of UNCANNY X-MEN, and continue with the good work!

Sandra Swindle

I approve of you most highly, Sandra. Not for your words complimenting that lazy writer wretch, of course – but for identifying how entertaining I am. It pleases Namor to know there are beautiful women interested in his adventures. As I defeat our next opponent, I will do it in your honour, my lady. - Namor

UNCANNY X-MEN is blowing my mind!

Understandably, the direction Cyclops has taken with his Extinction Team is a volatile one, but I couldn't be more excited about how it has developed, and I fully support it. The X-Men have been pushed around and dragged through the mud so many times that I find this course of action long overdue! Go Cyclops! No more being victims!

The team's roster has me beyond thrilled, being comprised of so many of my favorites! Danger! The Rasputins! Magneto! Miss Frost! And I was skeptical at first when Namor had join the X-ranks but he has become a fast favorite as well!

In fact, I can't help wondering how ALL of the team members feel about working alongside one another, given their respective titles as authority figures. Emma, Storm, Namor and Magik have each held royal titles, and Cyclops, Hope and Magneto have each played messianic roles in the mutant community at one point or another. I'm amazed they're not fighting among themselves as much as one might expect. I guess that just speaks highly of Scott's ability to lead, huh?

Really looking forward to future developments, especially with the Rasputins! Keep up the outstanding work!!

Christopher Judd!
Minneapolis, Minnesota

I admit, I shared your concern, Christopher. There are few who are familiar with the bended knee on the Extinction team – and that it operates as well as it does speaks highly of Summers. I believe it's a matter of purpose – purpose and intelligence. There are egos, certainly, but none of us are children. Except for Hope, but she is an unusual child. She is currently reading over my shoulder, and asking what I mean by "Unusual." I have told her by "Unusual" I mean "Unfortunate possessor of a mop of vile red hair." She is now angry and Namor is most amused. - Namor

Hope this letter finds you all well. I am a big admirer from Toronto, Canada EH! You can refer to me as Kri$ and yes that is a dollar sign for an "s".

Anyway, my questions before I forget.

1. Cyclops, which X-Man that went to the Jean Grey school do you miss the most and why?

2. After you last meeting with Sadie, we saw Magneto was just looming around the corner. Did he advise you on your course of action or was he there just for protection and looking cool?

3. After the schism, do you Scott still value Professor Xavier? Would you also consider taking in Legion, once he recovers. in your Extinction team, seeing he has godly powers?

4. Who takes care of laundry duties? Who cooks the meals? Who scrubs the toilets? In Jean Grey school, they have Toad so maybe you can have Avalanche take that task?

And that is all for my questions. I may not be a mutant "per se" (no X-gene), but I am behind you guys 110% and I can see your vision and just hope and pray that things start improving soon for all mutants. Good luck, and keep up the great work.

Kri$

I approve of your confidence, Kri$. One must have the strength of character to make their own name – and let none question it. You come to me with your head held high, so I will attempt to answer your impudent questions with more grace than I showed to Dennys.

1. However, that doesn't mean I will run off and ask Summers questions. I will give you my answer. I mainly miss Rogue, Rachel Grey, Kitty Pryde, Frenzy and Husk.

2. I understand this was an attempt to intimidate Sadie for her foul treachery. It's lucky for the people of San Francisco Summers didn't ask my advice – for I would have suggested sinking the whole of the city beneath a tidal wave.

3. I grow tired of these Scott questions. You are testing me. Beware my wrath.

4. That's it. I'm coming for you, Kri$. You and your people shall know the anger of Namor. Go! Be with your loved ones. Hold them. Say goodbye. For the future you have written for yourself is no future at all.

I am done. Begone.

- Namor

#8, PAGE 11 INKS BY GREG LAND & JAY LEISTEN

#8, **PAGE 19 INKS** BY GREG LAND & JAY LEISTEN

#10, PAGE 1 INKS BY CARLOS PACHECO & CAM SMITH

THE X-MEN AND AVENGERS – TOGETHER AGAIN, FOR THE LAST TIME?

A nuclear explosion has ripped a small Montana town to shreds. Cyclops has no idea what his Extinction Team will find inside the 10-mile-wide geodesic dome that has risen up inside the blast zone, or who caused it. Psylocke and Magneto do, but they're not telling. Can the X-Men solve the mystery of Tabula Rasa — and survive the experience? If they do, the worst of the worst galactic criminals are waiting for them, courtesy of an explosive jailbreak from S.W.O.R.D.'s orbiting prison. Will the combined might of the X-Men and Avengers be enough to bring them all in? As the heroes fight a global battle on multiple fronts, the mysterious presence known as Unit corners Hope Summers in Canada's wintry wastelands. And with Hope's survival in question, so is mutantkind's.

Collects *Uncanny X-Men #5-10* — written by Kieron Gillen (*Thor*), and illustrated by Greg Land (*Ultimate Fantastic Four*) and Carlos Pacheco (*Ultimate Avengers*).

T+

MARVEL